

From *Lauch Wald* to Headquarters, U.S. European Command

The continuing evolution of Patch Barracks

By Melanie Casey

Many of us working or living on Patch Barracks come and go without a second thought. We drive or walk right past monuments (both German and American) without realizing their significance.

We walk our dogs near a now-dilapidated fence that is nearly all that's left of the original border of our home-away-from-home, yet we don't stop to think what that fence represents.

When construction began on *Kurmärker Kaserne* (what we now know as Patch Barracks) in 1936, the world was a much different place. Adolph Hitler was chancellor of Germany, and the world was on the brink of a war that would change it forever.

In the beginning

Work on the new installation began in 1936 in the middle of the densely-wooded *Lauch Wald*. The base was designed and built for the German 7th Panzer Regiment (not to be confused with the 7th Panzer Division headed by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel), which occupied the new base from 1938 until 1940.

During this time, German tank crews practiced shooting in the installation's indoor ranges — one where the Patch Theater now stands, one in what is now the Patch Community Club and one near what is now Weicht Village.

The 21st and 715th Panzer regiments also both occupied Patch briefly. One of the last German tenants of the base was DaimlerBenz, which used building 2337 to make small parts after its Sindelfingen plant was bombed.

The "Stuttgart Incident"

Allied troops entering Stuttgart near the end of World War II met little resistance. However, an event took place shortly thereafter that challenged Allied authority in Germany.

French and U.S. forces disagreed on where their boundaries should lie. Originally, Stuttgart was in the zone of the French Army's 2nd Corps. However, Allied 6th Group Commander Gen. Jacob Devers ordered that Stuttgart fall within the zone of the 7th Army instead.

According to the European Command's "History of Kurmärker Kaserne and Patch Barracks," French President Charles de Gaulle "directed his commander to ignore Gen. Devers' orders and remain in Stuttgart until the Allies had agreed upon a suitable occupation zone in Germany for France."

Several weeks later, after the involvement of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and U.S. President Harry S. Truman, French forces left.

Who was Alexander Patch?

Patch Barracks is named in honor of Lt. Gen. Alexander McCarrell Patch Jr. Patch was born in Arizona in 1889 and graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1913.

During World War II, he formed the Americal Division, which served in Guadalcanal. Under his command, the 14th Corps led the final offensive against Japanese forces there.

In 1944, Patch was transferred to Europe and assumed command of the 7th Army, which, under his leadership, participated in Operation Dragoon. He briefly served as commander of the 4th Army.

Patch died of pneumonia Nov. 21, 1945.

Kurmärker Kaserne was renamed Patch Barracks Aug. 20, 1951.

source: www.patch-es.eu.odedodea.edu



Lt. Gen. Patch

U.S. occupation

The first U.S. unit stationed on Patch was the 373rd Field Artillery Battalion of the 100th Infantry Division. Troops moved July 7, 1945 — the same day French forces left.

The U.S. troops arrived to find a base that had been battered by years of war: There were broken windows, burned out vehicles, debris and bomb craters scattered throughout. Prisoners of war did much of the cleanup work.

The 373rd returned to the U.S. in Dec., 1945. Shortly thereafter, the 15th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (renamed the 15th Constabulary Squadron) took up residence; they stayed until 1950.

U.S. forces return

In 1950, with the Cold War looming, U.S. combat troops returned to Europe to help quell the threat of communist expansion.

In November, Headquarters, 7th Army, was reactivated and moved to Stuttgart.

Patch becomes Patch

Kurmärker Kaserne officially became Patch Barracks Aug. 20, 1951. It was named in honor of Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch Jr. (see box).

Of Patch's 44 original buildings, 37 remain; most have undergone extensive renovations.

In 1953, building 2337 was converted from an ordnance shop into a gym and a bowling alley. Between 1950 and 54, the "exercise platz" (what we know as Husky Field), was converted into an athletic field.

Housing added

Housing construction was one of the largest projects on Patch during the 1950s. Work began on the Old Craig housing area (named in honor of 2nd Lt. Robert Craig of the 3rd Infantry Division, who was killed in action in Sicily in 1943) and Kefurt Village (named in honor of Staff Sgt.

Gus Kefurt, a 3rd ID soldier killed in France in 1944) in 1950.

In 1954, construction began on Weicht Village (named in honor of Sgt. Ellis Weicht, a 36th Infantry Division Soldier killed in France in 1944). Work began on New Craig Village in 1955, and the individual homes along Florida Strasse were built in 1961.

EUCOM moves in

The EUCOM as we know it today was 'officially' born Aug. 1, 1952, when the three European commands in place at the time (U.S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and the European Command — redesignated U.S. Army, Europe) were combined under a new joint command with headquarters in Frankfurt.

In 1954, EUCOM moved to Camp-de-Loges on the outskirts of Paris and remained there until 1966, when de Gaulle requested the "fast relocation" of U.S. forces from France.

When Headquarters, 7th U.S. Army, merged with U.S. Army, Europe, in Heidelberg in 1967, Headquarters, EUCOM moved permanently to Patch.

Patch today

Patch Barracks is now home not only to EUCOM, but several other units including Special Operations Command, Europe; Detachment C, 510th Personnel Service Battalion; U.S. Air Forces in Europe Mission Support Squadron; Navy Personnel Support Detachment and Defense Information Systems Agency, Europe.

Sources:

■ Gugeler, Russell. "History of Kurmärker Kaserne and Patch Barracks." 1999. Courtesy European Command.

■ www.eucom.mil.

Reminders set in stone:

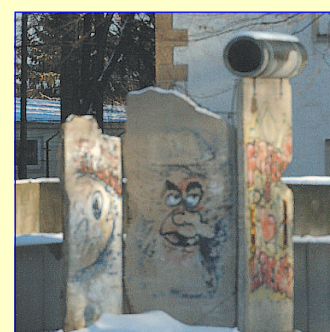
Patch Monuments

The large stone monument sitting near the south end of building 2307 in Washington Square was erected by the Germans in memory of the Soldiers from the 715th Infantry Division who died in World War II.

The inscription reads "*Den Toten den 715 I.D.*" (To the dead of the 715 th I.D.)



photos by Melanie Casey

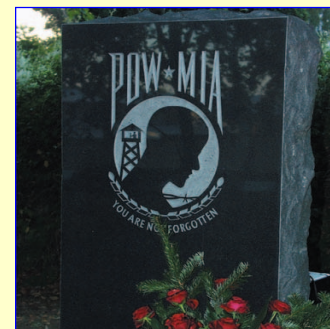


A slab of the Berlin Wall was installed on EUROM's J-Mall in the early 1990s, a reminder of what once was.

The Berlin Wall went up in 1961 and separated East and West Germany until it fell on Nov. 9, 1989.

The solemn black marble Prisoner of War/Missing in Action monument just off of Washington Square commemorates the thousands of missing U.S. Soldiers.

It was dedicated Sept. 20, 2002, after the efforts of the Stuttgart Clan of Motorcycle Enthusiasts.



In 1960, a tree was planted and a plaque was installed across from the flag poles on Washington Square.

They were dedicated by Minister-President Kurt Georg Kiesinger of Baden Württemberg in recognition of German/American friendship.

The newest monument on Patch Barracks is the Korean War Memorial, which was unveiled July 25, 2003.

The effort to build this memorial was led by American Legion Stuttgart Post 6; funds came from donations and various fund-raising activities.



"We learn from history that we never learn anything from history."

— Georg Hegel
German philosopher

This article is the first installment in a series about the history of life in the 6th Area Support Group.